



ADC assists in search

By Eric Petermann / Sep 6 2013 - 5:41pm

On Thursday at approximately 6:30 p.m., the Cochise County Sheriff's Office was advised of several subjects lost in the area of the dry lakes southwest of Willcox. The caller advised that there were three adults and four children, ages 8, 10, 10, and 11, who went to the area on Wednesday evening and their vehicles experienced mechanical issues, stranding them there for the night. The caller advised that he did not believe any of these subjects had adequate food or water to sustain them throughout the day.

Information gathered by deputies indicated that on Wednesday at approximately 5 p.m., a 33-year-old male, along with his 32-year-old friend and his four children, were in the dry lake beds when their vehicle broke down. At approximately 9 p.m., the man advised that he called his wife for assistance who responded to the area in a four-wheel-drive vehicle to help rescue the stranded subjects.

Between 10 and 11 p.m. on Wednesday, the woman called her husband and advised that she was lost, and she had broken down as well. The man left his children and his friend and began walking toward the location where his wife was reportedly at. After finally arriving at her vehicle and making contact with her, they decided to wait until daylight to walk back to the car where the others were waiting. The husband and wife began walking and ultimately arrived back at the first vehicle, however, the subjects were no longer there. The husband advised that foot tracks led towards the Apache power plant, and they began walking in that direction to locate the friend and their four children. The man and woman ended up near the railroad tracks.

At approximately 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, Sheriff's deputies activated the search and rescue Team who responded to the area and requested air support assistance from the Arizona Department of Public Safety Ranger helicopter. Due to the nighttime conditions additional assistance was requested from the United States Customs and Border Protection air support fixed wing which is equipped with FLIR, an asset used to detect heat images in the dark. Also assisting was an Arizona Department of Corrections dog chase team.

At approximately 10 p.m., Union Pacific Railroad advised they had a train eastbound when they observed a man and woman by the tracks who seemed to be in distress. At approximately 10:40 pm, the man and woman were located along the railroad tracks and transported to a mobile command post which was set up in Willcox where they were checked for any medical issues. Both subjects refused any medical treatment.

At approximately 2:57 a.m., the four children and the friend were located in a remote area of the dry lake bed by US CBP utilizing the FLIR capability and airlifted by the DPS helicopter to the command post where they were checked by Health Care Innovation medics and determined to be in good health.

All units cleared the scene at approximately 5 a.m.